WATCHMEN
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WATCHMEN

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WATCHMEN 3
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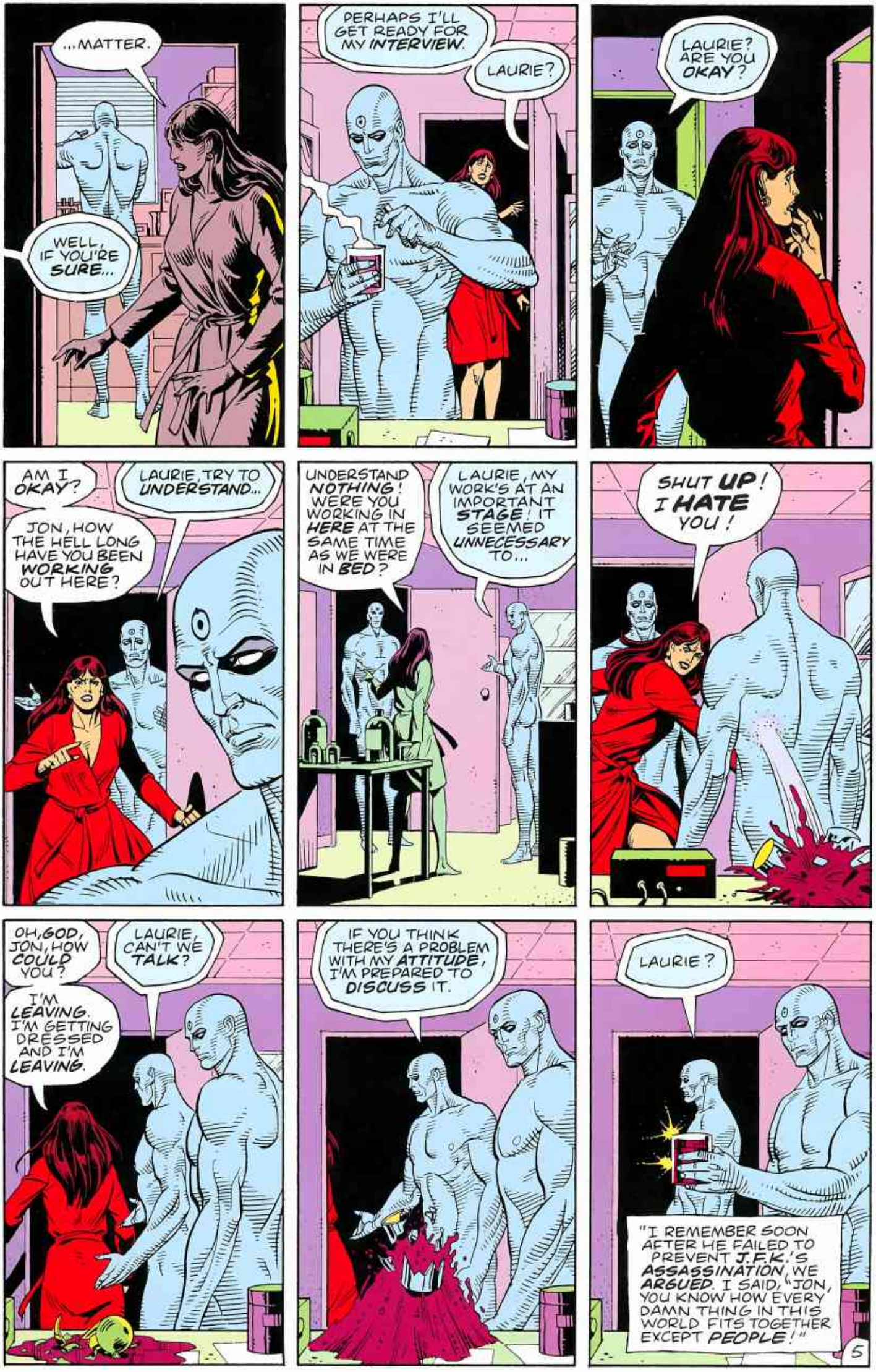
DELIRIOUS, I SAW THAT HELL-BOUND SHIP'S BLACK SAILS AGAINST THE YELLOW INDIES SKY, AND KNEW AGAIN THE STENCH OF POWDER, AND MEN'S BRAINS, AND WAR.
WE OUGHTTA NUKE RUSSIA, AND LET GOD SORT IT OUT.
FALLOUT
SHELTER
I MEAN, I SEE THE SIGNS, READ THE HEADLINES, LOOK THINGS INNA FACE, Y'KNOW?
THE HEADS NAILED TO ITS PROW LOOKED DOWN, THOSE WITH EYES; GULL-EATEN; SALT-CAKED; LIPLESSLY MOUTHING, "NO USE! ALL'S LOST!"
THE WAVES ABOUT ME WERE SCARLET, FOAMING, HORRIBLY WARM, YET STILL THE FREIGHTER'S HIDEOUS CREW CALLED OUT, "MORE BLOOD! MORE BLOOD!"
FALLOUT SHELTER
MISSING WRITER
I'M A NEWSVENDOR, GODDAMNIT! I'M INFORMED ON THE SITUATION! WE OUGHTTA NUKE 'EM TILL THEY GLOW!
ITS TAR-STREAKED HULL ROLLED OVER ME. IN DESPAIR I SANK BENEATH THOSE FOUL, PINK BILLOWS, OFFERING UP MY WRETCHED SOUL TO ALMIGHTY GOD, HIS MERCY AND HIS JUDGMENT.
'COURSE, THAT'S JUST MY OPINION.
PROMETHEAN CAB CO.
FALLOUT SHELTER
NEWS
NY
BOOKLINE NEWS
1

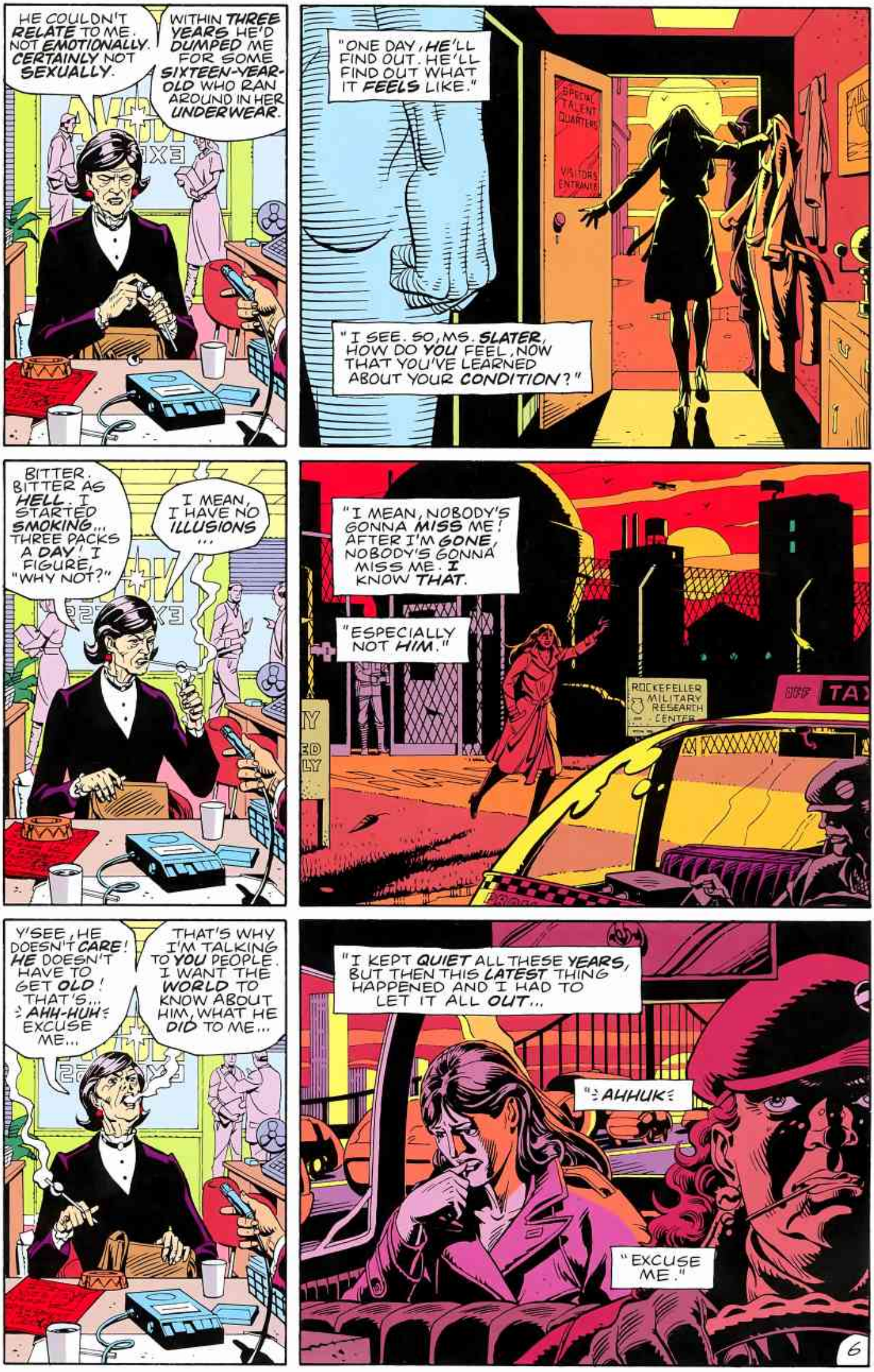
THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH

FOR WHAT THAT'S WORTH, Y'KNOW?
INNA FINAL ANALYSIS.
INSTITUTE FOR EXTRASPATIAL STUDIES
WAKING FROM NIGHTMARE, I FOUND MYSELF UPON A DISMAL BEACH-HEAD, AMONGST DEAD MEN AND THE PIECES OF DEAD MEN.
LISSEN, I SEE EVERY GODDAMN FRONT PAGE INNA WORLD. I ABSORB INFORMATION! I MISS NOTHING.
BOSUN RIDLEY LAY NEARBY. BIRDS WERE EATING HIS THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES.
F'R'INSTANCE ...THE MORE DISASTERS HAPPEN, THE MORE PAPERS I SELL! EXPLAIN THAT!
READER, TAKE COMFORT FROM THIS: IN HELL, AT LEAST THE GULLS ARE CONTENTED.
SEE, EVERYTHING'S CONNECTED. A NEWSVENDOR UNNERSTANDS THAT. HE DON'T RETREAT FROM REALITY.
FOR MY PART, I BEGGED THAT THEY SHOULD TAKE MY EYES, THUS SPARING ME FURTHER HORRORS.
UNHEEDED, I STOOD IN THE SURF AND WEPT, UNABLE TO BEAR MY CIRCUMSTANCES.
THE WEIGHT O' THE WORLD'S ON HIM, BUT DOES HE QUIT? NAH! HE'S LIKE ATLAS! HE CAN TAKE IT!
HE'S A SURVIVOR.
IT'S LIKE THIS AFTER-NOON: NOVA EXPRESS IS HOLDIN' ITS FRONT PAGE, SO NO DELIVERY 'TIL TONIGHT! A CATAS-TROPHE!
...BUT I COPED!
EVENTUALLY, TEARS CEASED. MY MISFORTUNES WERE SMALL: I WAS ALIVE...
NEWSVENDORS ALWAYS COPE! THEY'RE INDESTRUCTIBLE! THEY THRIVE ON DISASTER! THEY...
OH. GOOD AFTERNOON, SIR.
...AND I KNEW THAT LIFE HAD NO WORSE NEWS TO OFFER ME.
THE END IS NIGH
GOOD AFTERNOON.
IS IT HERE YET?
2

HUH?
OH! YOUR COPY O' THE NEW FRONTIERSMAN! SURE IT'S HERE. I KEEP IT FOR YA EVERY DAY, DON'T I?
HOW'S THE ENNA THE WORLD COMIN' ALONG?
IT'LL HAPPEN TODAY. I'VE SEEN SIGNS. NATIONAL EXAMINER REPORTED A TWO-HEADED CAT BORN IN QUEENS.
TODAY FOR CERTAIN.
YOU'LL KEEP MY PAPER FOR ME TOMORROW?
UHH... SURE. SURE I WILL. NO SWEAT.
HAVE A NICE DAY.
NEWS
STUDIES
YOU WON'T FORGET?
FPFFF
I HAD A SUDDEN MEMORY OF CLINGING FAST TO SOMEONE THROUGH THE TEMPEST. THE FIGUREHEAD LAY AT MY FEET, BLINDFOLDED BY SEAWEED. ALONE UPON THAT DREADFUL SHORE, SHE SMILED.
I MADE TO TAKE THE RIBBON OF KELP FROM OFF HER PAINTED EYES, THEN THOUGHT BETTER OF IT, NOT WISHING HER TO SUFFER THE TERRIBLE DISTRACTIONS OF THAT GRIM TIDELINE.
IT WAS ALL I COULD DO FOR HER, THOUGH SHE HAD BORNE ME THROUGH SEAS OF BLOOD, THOUGH HER COLD, WOODEN BREAST HAD NOURISHED ME IN THE HEART OF THE STORM.
HER DAMP EMBRACE HAD PREVENTED ME FROM DRIFTING BEYOND REACH, YET THIS SMALL COMFORT WAS ALL I COULD OFFER...

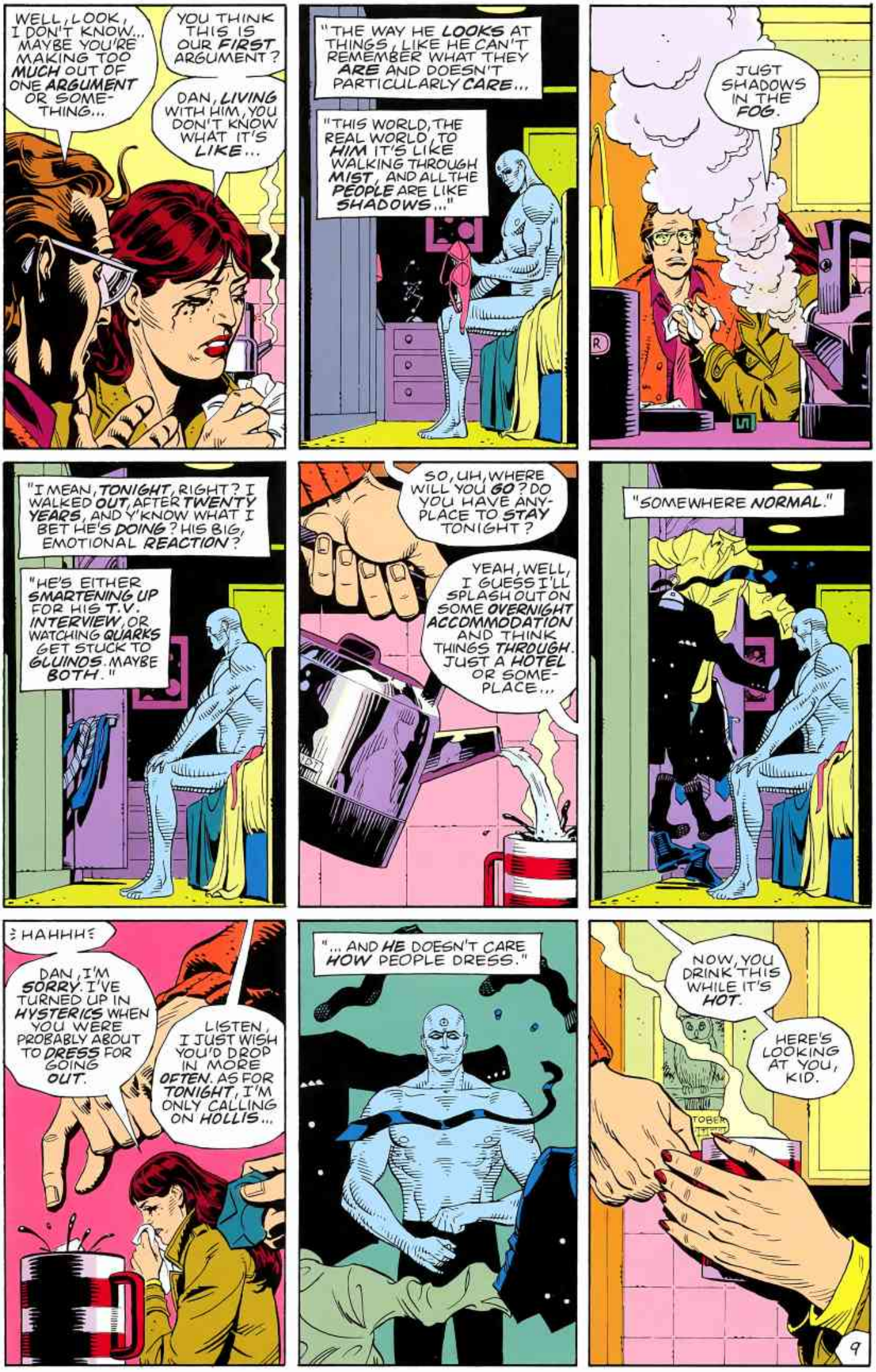
I COULD NOT LOVE HER AS SHE HAD LOVED ME.
MURRMM. JON? WHEN DO YOU HAVE TO DO THAT T.V. INTERVIEW THIS EVENING? IS IT SOON?
NO. WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME.
:PHPP:
GOOD. HEY, YOUR FINGER, IT'S LIKE LICKING A FLASH-LIGHT BATTERY. IT'S ALL SORT OF...
UHH...
AAAAAA
OH, GOD! OH, GOD, THAT'S HORRIBLE! STOP IT!
LAURIE? DON'T BE UPSET.
I THOUGHT YOU'D ENJOY IT. I DO TRY TO PLEASE YOU...
JON, BE ONE PERSON AGAIN!
I--I KNOW. I'M SORRY. I OVER-REACTED.
YOU, YOU JUST STARTLED ME, IS ALL.
LOOK, I GOTTA GO FIND A CIGARETTE. I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
I'M SORRY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT STIMULATES YOU ANY-MORE.
JON, PLEASE, IT'S OKAY. JUST FORGET IT. I'M FINE REALLY. IT DOESN'T...
4


...MATTER.
WELL, IF YOU'RE SURE...
PERHAPS I'LL GET READY FOR MY INTERVIEW.
LAURIE?
LAURIE? ARE YOU OKAY?
AM I OKAY?
LAURIE, TRY TO UNDERSTAND...
JON, HOW THE HELL LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING OUT HERE?
UNDERSTAND NOTHING! WERE YOU WORKING IN HERE AT THE SAME TIME AS WE WERE IN BED?
LAURIE, MY WORK'S AT AN IMPORTANT STAGE! IT SEEMED UNNECESSARY TO...
SHUT UP! I HATE YOU!
OH, GOD, JON, HOW COULD YOU?
LAURIE, CAN'T WE TALK?
I'M LEAVING. I'M GETTING DRESSED AND I'M LEAVING.
IF YOU THINK THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH MY ATTITUDE, I'M PREPARED TO DISCUSS IT.
LAURIE?
"I REMEMBER SOON AFTER HE FAILED TO PREVENT J.F.K.'S ASSASSINATION, WE ARGUED. I SAID, "JON, YOU KNOW HOW EVERY DAMN THING IN THIS WORLD FITS TOGETHER EXCEPT PEOPLE!"
5


HE COULDN'T RELATE TO ME. NOT EMOTIONALLY. CERTAINLY NOT SEXUALLY.
WITHIN THREE YEARS HE'D DUMPED ME FOR SOME SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD WHO RAN AROUND IN HER UNDERWEAR.
"ONE DAY, HE'LL FIND OUT. HE'LL FIND OUT WHAT IT FEELS LIKE."
SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS
VISITORS ENTRANCE
"I SEE. SO, MS. SLATER, HOW DO YOU FEEL, NOW THAT YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION?"
BITTER. BITTER AS HELL. I STARTED SMOKING... THREE PACKS A DAY! I FIGURE, "WHY NOT?"
I MEAN, I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ...
"I MEAN, NOBODY'S GONNA MISS ME! AFTER I'M GONE, NOBODY'S GONNA MISS ME. I KNOW THAT.
"ESPECIALLY NOT HIM."
ROCKEFELLER MILITARY RESEARCH CENTER
OFF TAX
Y'SEE, HE DOESN'T CARE! HE DOESN'T HAVE TO GET OLD! THAT'S... AHH-HUH EXCUSE ME...
THAT'S WHY I'M TALKING TO YOU PEOPLE. I WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW ABOUT HIM, WHAT HE DID TO ME...
"I KEPT QUIET ALL THESE YEARS, BUT THEN THIS LATEST THING HAPPENED AND I HAD TO LET IT ALL OUT...
"AHHUK
"EXCUSE ME."

:AHEK: :AHEK: AFTER ALL HE MEANT TO ME... AFTER ALL THE TIMES HE SAID HE LOVED ME...
IT'S OKAY, MS. SLATER...
:AHEK-HECH-HECH-HECH: OH, I'M SORRY...
"...IF YOU WANT, WE CAN STOP HERE."
Where is the essence that was so divine?
Nostalgia
by VEIDT
TREASURE ISLAND
:EHUK: :EHUK-HEH: :EHUK-EHUK:
:AHEHH:
UH, MS. SLATER, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR HELPING NOVA EXPRESS SO MUCH WITH THESE INVESTIGATIONS. I'M SURE AFTER THE PAPER FINALLY GOES OUT TONIGHT YOU'LL FEEL SO MUCH BETTER...
"NO, I WON'T. :AHEHHM: NOT AFTER WHAT HE DID TO ME. SOME THINGS, ONCE THEY'RE BUSTED, THEY CAN'T EVER BE FIXED..."
...BUT I'M GLAD YOUR PAPER CONTACTED ME, AND I'M GLAD THAT AFTER THAT SHOW TONIGHT, EVERYBODY'S GONNA KNOW WHAT HE DID.
OH, GOD, IT'S SUCH A RELIEF...
"IT'S SUCH A RELIEF JUST TO TALK TO SOMEBODY."
LAURIE?
7

UH, WELL, COME ON IN! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS MESS...I'M HAVING A NEW LOCK FITTED.
UH, FINE. THANK YOU.
S'OKAY, FRIEND. ALMOST THROUGH HERE.
GORDIAN KNOT LOCK CO.
IF YOU WANT TO COME ON INTO THE KITCHEN, I'LL MAKE COFFEE.
IT'S FUNNY... I WAS HOPING I'D RUN INTO YOU SO I COULD THANK YOU FOR THAT DINNER LAST WEEK...
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D BE AT THE FUNERAL, BUT JON SAID YOU'D HAD TO VISIT YOUR MOTHER.
HERE... TAKE A CHAIR...
YOU TAKE SUGAR WITH YOUR COFFEE?
SUGAR
Kleenex
K
UH, YES. YES, TWO SUGARS.
NO PROBLEM.
SO, ANYWAY, HOW IS YOUR MOM? HOLLIS MASON WAS ASKING AFTER HER JUST THE OTHER WEEK...
SUGAR
OH, SHE'S GREAT. JUST GREAT.
HELL, I THOUGHT I HAD MORE SUGAR THAN THAT. IS ONE LUMP OKAY OR SHOULD I GO OUT...?
NO. ONE LUMP'S FINE. JUST FINE...
UHUHUH
UHUHUHUH
:HHHUCH:
IGAR
UH...LAURIE? HEY... HEY, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
:AHUHU:
:FNFF: OH, GOD, OH, GOD, I'M SO SORRY...
HEY, LOOK, IT'S OKAY. HERE'S SOME KLEENEX ...
I MEAN, UH, LISTEN... WHATEVER'S BOTHERING YOU, IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, RIGHT?
I LEFT JON.
Kleenex
OH, I SEE. THAT IS, I, UH ...
I'M SORRY. I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M DUMPING IT ON YOU. I JUST...
I JUST DON'T NUH-KNOW ANYBODY ELSE! I DON'T KNOW ANY-BODY EXCEPT GODDAMNED SUH-SUPER-HEROES!
8


WELL, LOOK, I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE YOU'RE MAKING TOO MUCH OUT OF ONE ARGUMENT OR SOMETHING...
YOU THINK THIS IS OUR FIRST ARGUMENT?
DAN, LIVING WITH HIM, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE...
"THE WAY HE LOOKS AT THINGS, LIKE HE CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT THEY ARE AND DOESN'T PARTICULARLY CARE...
"THIS WORLD, THE REAL WORLD, TO HIM IT'S LIKE WALKING THROUGH MIST, AND ALL THE PEOPLE ARE LIKE SHADOWS..."
JUST SHADOWS IN THE FOG.
"I MEAN, TONIGHT, RIGHT? I WALKED OUT, AFTER TWENTY YEARS, AND Y'KNOW WHAT I BET HE'S DOING? HIS BIG, EMOTIONAL REACTION?
"HE'S EITHER SMARTENING UP FOR HIS T.V. INTERVIEW, OR WATCHING QUARKS GET STUCK TO GLUINOS. MAYBE BOTH."
SO, UH, WHERE WILL YOU GO? DO YOU HAVE ANYPLACE TO STAY TONIGHT?
YEAH, WELL, I GUESS I'LL SPLASH OUT ON SOME OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION AND THINK THINGS THROUGH. JUST A HOTEL OR SOMEPLACE...
"SOMEWHERE NORMAL."
:HAHHH:
DAN, I'M SORRY. I'VE TURNED UP IN HYSTERICS WHEN YOU WERE PROBABLY ABOUT TO DRESS FOR GOING OUT.
LISTEN, I JUST WISH YOU'D DROP IN MORE OFTEN. AS FOR TONIGHT, I'M ONLY CALLING ON HOLLIS...
"... AND HE DOESN'T CARE HOW PEOPLE DRESS."
NOW, YOU DRINK THIS WHILE IT'S HOT.
HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID.
9

YEAH. HERE'S LOOKING AT ME.
Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES I LOOK AT MYSELF AND I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

"SOMETIMES I LOOK AT MYSELF AND THINK, 'HOW DID EVERYTHING GET SO TANGLED UP?'"

ANYWAY, YOU DON'T WANT TO GET INTO ALL THAT STUFF.
C'MON ... I'M HOLDING YOU UP FROM VISITING HOLLIS. GRAB YOUR COAT AND I'LL WALK OVER THERE WITH YOU.
DON'T YOU WANT YOUR COFFEE?

"NAH. I'M SORRY ... IT'S TOO BITTER.
"ANYWAY, I'D RATHER BE SOMEWHERE ELSE THAN SITTING HERE FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF."

WELL, LOOK, IF YOU'RE SURE YOU WOULDN'T RATHER SIT AND TALK. HOLLIS WOULD UNDERSTAND IF I WAS LATE...
DAN, LISTEN, IT'S ALMOST SIX FIFTEEN ALREADY, AND YOU KNOW NEW YORK ON A SATURDAY NIGHT...

"SOMETIMES THE CABS JUST DISAPPEAR AND GETTING FROM A TO B TAKES FOREVER."

WELL, I'M ALL THROUGH HERE. YOU'RE SAFE AS HOUSES. WHAT HAPPENED ANYWAY? Y'GET ROBBED?
UH, NO. NO ... A FRIEND. HE CALLED WHEN I WASN'T EXPECTING HIM...
HAH! I GOT BUDDIES LIKE THAT, ALWAYS TURNIN' UP DRUNK...

"COMPLETELY OUTTA THE BLUE!"

INCIDENTALLY, LADY, I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID, ABOUT CABS. WHY DON'T YOU CALL MY BROTHER'S COMPANY, THE PROMETHEAN? IT BEATS WALKIN'. THESE ARE BAAAD NEIGHBORHOODS.
THAT'S OKAY.
I'M IN A BAAAD MOOD.

OH! SO, DR. OSTERMAN FINALLY ARRIVES AND NOBODY THINKS TO TELL ME! MARVELOUS!
DUH--DON'T BLAME ME! I ONLY JUST TOOK OVER RECEPTION AN' HE JUST APPEARED!
I FEEL SICK. THEY'RE NOT PAYING ME ENOUGH FOR THIS...
"THEY'RE NOT PAYING ME ENOUGH TO HANDLE MONSTERS FROM OUTTA SPACE!"
IS ISLAND EARTH
YOU HAVEN'T LEFT US TIME FOR MAKEUP! THAT BLUE IS FAR TOO LIGHT FOR TELEVISION...
DR. OSTERMAN? I'M FORBES, ARMY INTELLIGENCE. HERE'S A LIST OF NO-GO AREAS. OBVIOUSLY, AFGHANISTAN WILL ARISE, BUT PLAY IT COOL...
abc
"...AND TRY NOT TO GET INTO ANY TIGHT CORNERS."
IS THIS DARK ENOUGH?
MY GOD.
UHH, WELL, YES. YES, THAT'S JUST PERFECT...
"THAT'S CERTAINLY DARK ENOUGH FOR MY PURPOSES."
11

IF THE GENEVA TALKS COME UP, THE OFFICIAL POSITION IS THAT THEY CAN'T RESUME UNTIL THE SOVIETS AGREE TO EXCLUDE YOU FROM THE AGENDA.
SHHH! WE'RE ON!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I THINK WE'RE READY TO START...
EXIT
"... AND BELIEVE ME, WE HAVE SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL FOR YOU TONIGHT."
IN HIS FIRST EVER LIVE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION, LET'S HAVE A BIG HAND PLEASE FOR DOC MANHATTAN HIMSELF, DR. JONATHAN OSTERMAN!
JON, I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE ME FOR ASKING YOU THIS...
"...BUT WHAT'S UP, DOC?"
"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!"
"UP" IS A RELATIVE CONCEPT. IT HAS NO INTRINSIC VALUE.
UHH...RIGHT! OKAY! SO LET'S GET ONTO THE QUESTIONS. YOU... OVER THERE...
DOC, IF THE REDS ACT UP IN AFGHANISTAN...
"...WILL YOU BE PREPARED TO ENTER HOSTILITIES?"
KLAPKLAPKLAPKLAPKLAPKLAPKLAP
12

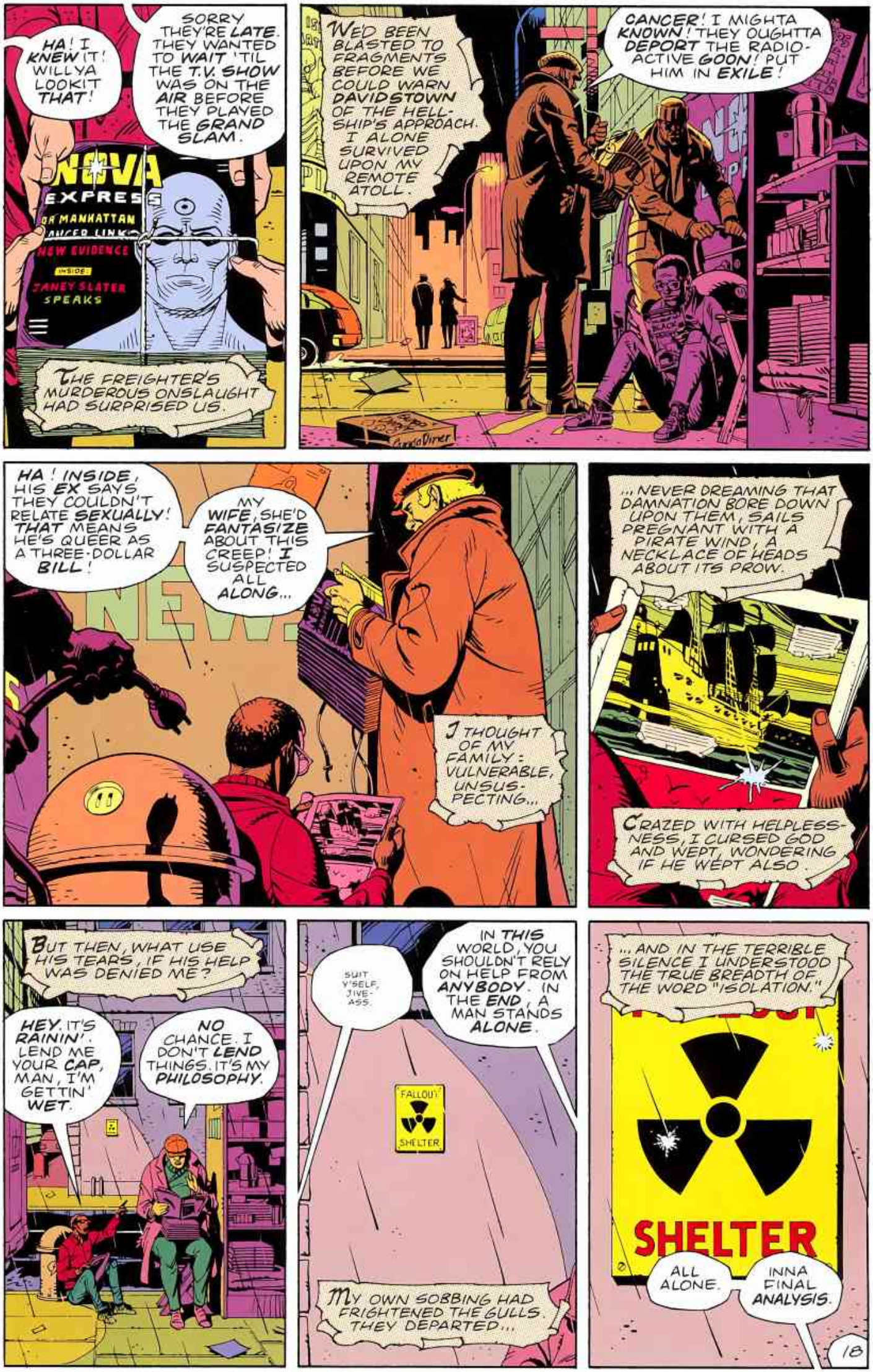
AS FAR AS I KNOW, THERE IS NO SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN CURRENTLY REQUIRING MY ATTENTIONS.
OKAY, FINE. NOW HOW ABOUT YOU OVER THERE. YES, YOU, SIR. AND PLEASE...
"LET'S TRY AND KEEP IT SNAPPY."
DR. OSTERMAN, I'M DOUG ROTH, I WRITE FOR NOVA EXPRESS.
I WONDER IF YOU REMEMBER WALLY WEAVER. BACK IN THE EARLY SIXTIES, THE NEWSPAPERS CALLED HIM "DR. MANHATTAN'S BUDDY."
HE DIED OF CANCER IN 1971.
EXIT
PRESS
"I BELIEVE IT WAS QUITE SUDDEN AND QUITE PAINFUL."
I REMEMBER WALLY AS A GOOD FRIEND. I ATTENDED HIS FUNERAL.
REALLY?
HOW ABOUT EDGAR W. JACOBI, ALSO KNOWN AS MOLOCH? YOU ENCOUNTERED HIM SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE SIXTIES IN BATTLES, CONFLICTS...
"...WHATEVER IT IS YOU SUPER-PEOPLE DO."
13

DID YOU KNOW THAT JACOBI ALSO HAS TERMINAL CANCER?
MOLOCH...? NO...NO, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT. I'D RATHER NOT...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, DOCTOR? DON'T YOU LIKE THE LINE OF QUESTIONING?
"AM I STARTING TO MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE?"
THEN HOW ABOUT THIS ONE: DID YOU KNOW THAT MS. JANEY SLATER, LINKED ROMANTICALLY WITH YOU IN THE SIXTIES, IS CURRENTLY SUFFERING FROM LUNG CANCER?
DOCTORS HAVE GIVEN HER SIX MONTHS TO LIVE.
NOTICE ANY CONNECTION?
"...BECAUSE FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, IT'S STARTING TO LOOK PRETTY CONCLUSIVE."
JANEY..? BUT... I WASN'T TOLD...
ARE...ARE YOU SUGGESTING...?
OKAY, THAT'S IT! NO MORE QUESTIONS! THE DOCTOR'S TIRED. SORRY ABOUT THIS, FOLKS...
"...BUT THE SHOW'S OVER."
14

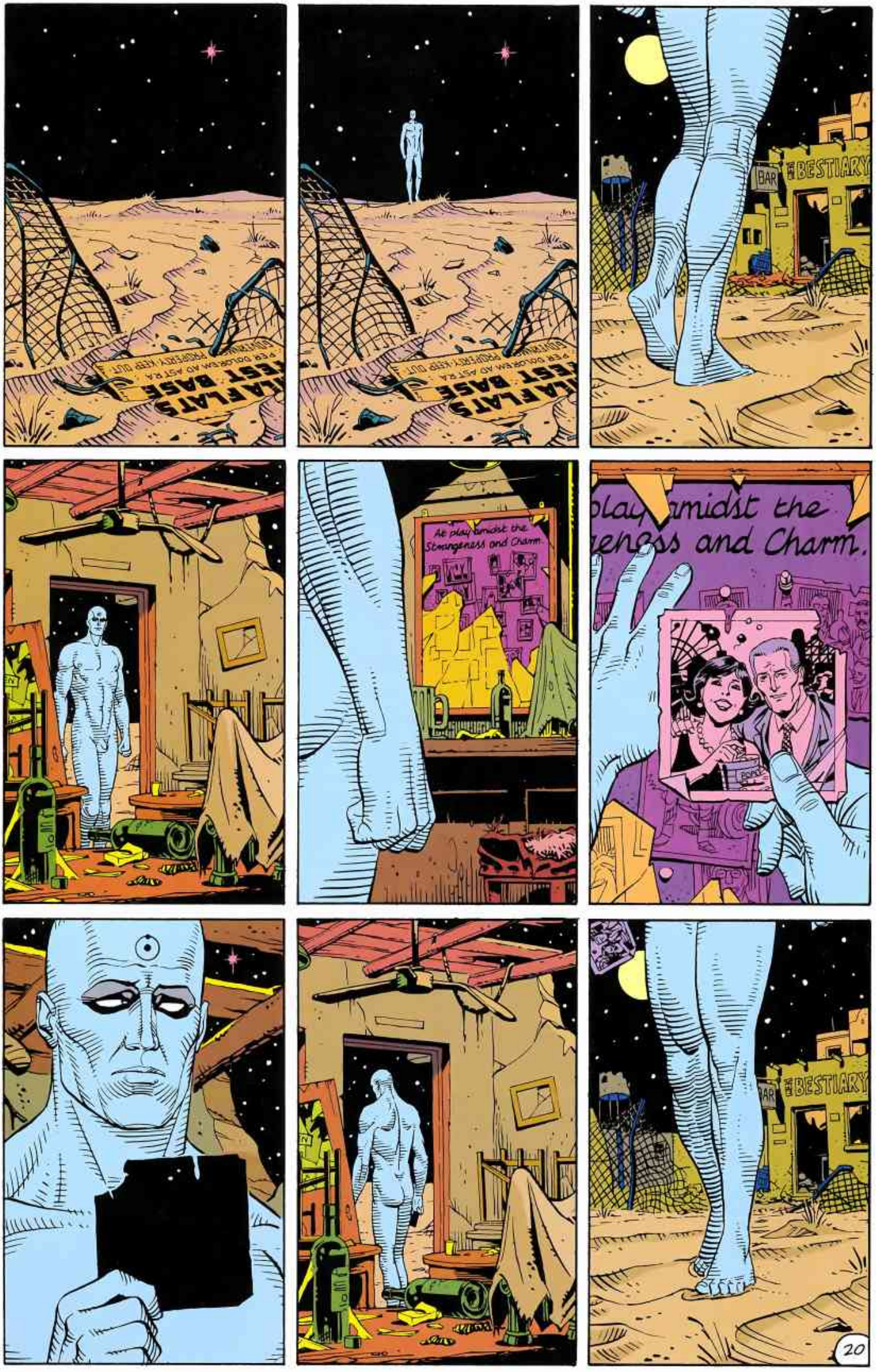
ALSO, WE HAVE REPORTS OF MORE THAN TWO DOZEN OTHER PAST ASSOCIATES, SIMILARLY AFFLICTED ...
DR. OSTERMAN? TINA PRICE, FROM THE WASHINGTON POST. ARE THESE ALLEGATIONS TRUE?
C'MON, LET'S GET OUT! THE MOB'S GETTING AROUSED ...
AHUHH
HHUH
HUH
HAHH
HAH
AH
DOC, I'M JIM WEISS, FROM THE ENQUIRER? TELL ME, DO YOU THINK YOU GAVE MS. SLATER CANCER BY SLEEPING WITH HER?
NO. PLEASE ... IF YOU'LL LET ME THROUGH...
LET HIM THROUGH. HE'S NOT HERE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON INTIMATE MOMENTS!
AHUH
HUH
HOW DOES IT FEEL TO KNOW THAT YOU MAY HAVE DOOMED HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE?
PLEASE... IF EVERYBODY WOULD JUST GO AWAY AND LEAVE ME ALONE...
GENTLEMEN, I THINK IT SAFEST NOT TO PURSUE THIS LINE OF THINKING...

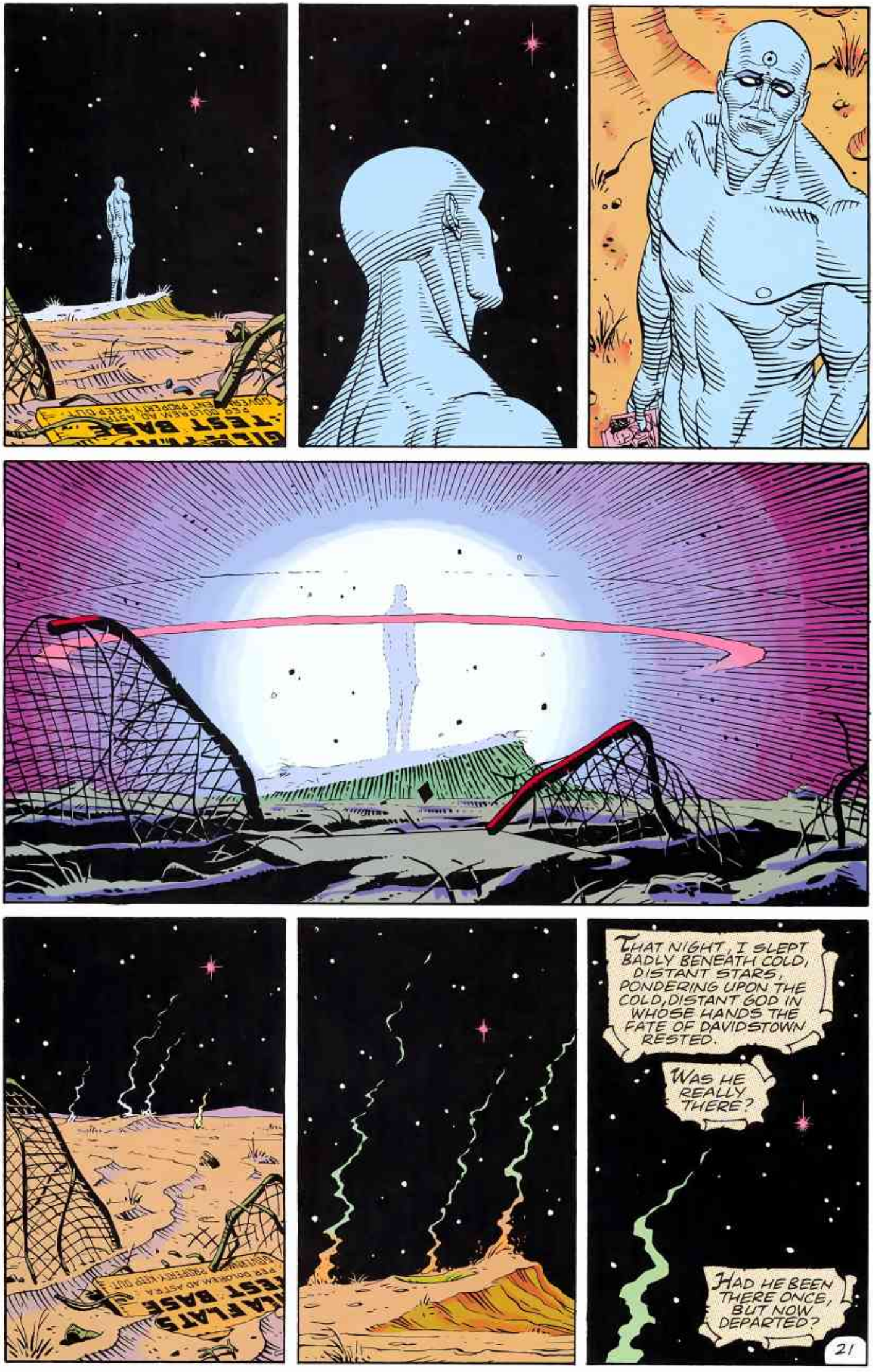
DR. MANHATTAN, HOW OFTEN DID...
I SAID LEAVE ME ALONE!
UH...WELL...
I GUESS I OUGHTTA GO FIND A HOTEL. I'M A BIT WIPED OUT. I MEAN, AFTER THAT... I MEAN, JESUS, US! GETTING MUGGED!
LOOK... I'M SHAKING. ONCE THE ADRENALINE WEARS OFF I ALWAYS FEEL SORTA WEIRD...
"SORTA EMPTY."
WELL, LOOK, ARE YOU SURE? WHY NOT VISIT HOLLIS AND GET YOUR BREATH BACK?
UH-UH. I'VE HAD ENOUGH SUPER-HERO STUFF FOR ONE DAY.
I'M GONNA FIND A HOTEL AND THINK MY RELATIONSHIP OVER...
"...SEE IF I CAN COME UP WITH ONE GOOD REASON TO STICK AROUND.
"GOD, Y'KNOW, IT FEELS SO MUCH BETTER NOW IT'S OUT IN THE OPEN. THANKS FOR LISTENING."
ANYWAY, YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, DAN. IT'S A TOUGH WORLD OUT THERE.
YEAH. YOU TOO, LAURIE.
'BYE.

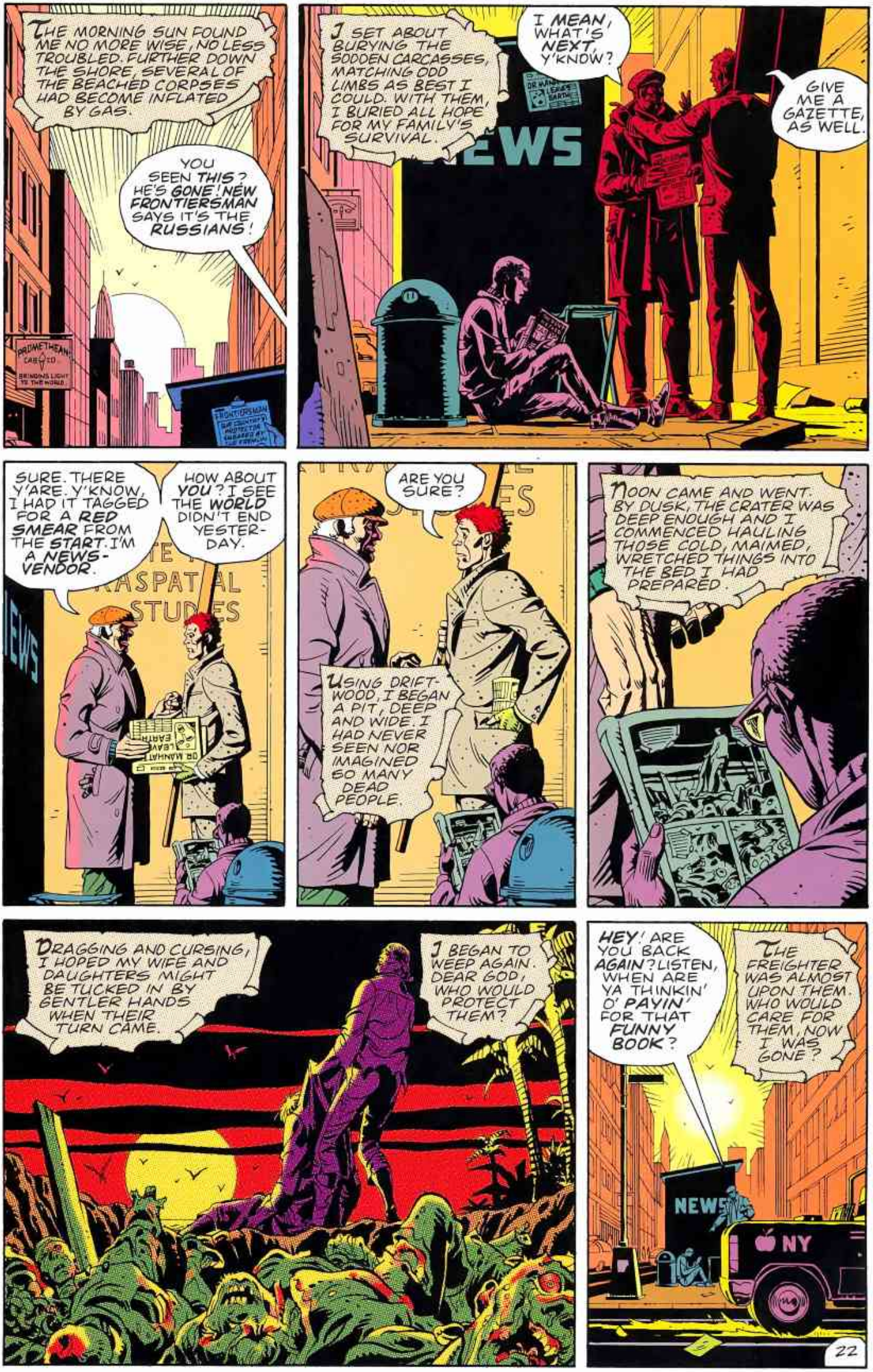
DANNY! HOW ARE YA?
YOU'RE LATE. I THOUGHT YOU'D HAD AN ACCIDENT!
NO... NO, I JUST HAD A LITTLE SKIRMISH...
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE. I JUST BEEN WATCHIN' DOC MANHATTAN ON T.V.! THEY JUST ABOUT CRUCIFIED THE POOR GUY...
JON? UH...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SOME GUY STOOD UP AN' ACCUSED HIM OF GIVING A LOT OF PEOPLE CANCER, INCLUDING JANEY SLATER.
DOC LOOKED REAL SHAKEN, STARTED SHOUTING TO BE LEFT ALONE. ONE MOMENT, THE CAMERAS WERE IN CLOSE ON HIM...
... THE NEXT, THE SCREEN WENT BLOOEY AND THEN WE WERE GETTIN' PICTURES OF A PARKING LOT.
HE'D TELEPORTED EVERYBODY OUTTA THE T.V. BUILDING, CAMERAS AN' ALL.
BUT... BUT I WAS JUST WITH LAURIE. SHE DOESN'T KNOW...
WELL, SHE'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH. THAT SHOW WENT OUT ON PRIME TIME.
THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW SOON ENOUGH.
EDITED REPLA
17


HA! I KNEW IT! WILLYA LOOKIT THAT!
SORRY THEY'RE LATE. THEY WANTED TO WAIT 'TIL THE T.V. SHOW WAS ON THE AIR BEFORE THEY PLAYED THE GRAND SLAM.
NOVA EXPRESS
OR MANHATTAN SLICED LINK
NEW EVIDENCE
INSIDE:
JANEY SLATER SPEAKS
THE FREIGHTER'S MURDEROUS ONSLAUGHT HAD SURPRISED US.
WE'D BEEN BLASTED TO FRAGMENTS BEFORE WE COULD WARN DAVIDSTOWN OF THE HELL-SHIP'S APPROACH. I ALONE SURVIVED UPON MY REMOTE ATOLL.
CANCER! I MIGHTA KNOWN! THEY OUGHTTA DEPORT THE RADIO-ACTIVE GOON! PUT HIM IN EXILE!
HA! INSIDE, HIS EX SAYS THEY COULDN'T RELATE SEXUALLY! THAT MEANS HE'S QUEER AS A THREE-DOLLAR BILL!
MY WIFE, SHE'D FANTASIZE ABOUT THIS CREEP! I SUSPECTED ALL ALONG...
I THOUGHT OF MY FAMILY: VULNERABLE, UNSUSPECTING...
... NEVER DREAMING THAT DAMNATION BORE DOWN UPON THEM, SAILS PREGNANT WITH A PIRATE WIND, A NECKLACE OF HEADS ABOUT ITS PROW.
CRAZED WITH HELPLESSNESS, I CURSED GOD AND WEPT, WONDERING IF HE WEPT ALSO.
BUT THEN, WHAT USE HIS TEARS, IF HIS HELP WAS DENIED ME?
HEY. IT'S RAININ'. LEND ME YOUR CAP, MAN, I'M GETTIN' WET.
NO CHANCE. I DON'T LEND THINGS. IT'S MY PHILOSOPHY.
SUIT Y'SELF, JIVE-ASS.
IN THIS WORLD, YOU SHOULDN'T RELY ON HELP FROM ANYBODY. IN THE END, A MAN STANDS ALONE.
FALLOUT SHELTER
MY OWN SOBBING HAD FRIGHTENED THE GULLS. THEY DEPARTED...
... AND IN THE TERRIBLE SILENCE I UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE BREADTH OF THE WORD "ISOLATION."
SHELTER
ALL ALONE.
INNA FINAL ANALYSIS.
18

WALKIN' ON...
WALKIN' ON THE MOOOO-OOOON...
DANGER
QUARANTINE
AREA
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WAAGH!
I--I'M SORRY, DR. OSTERMAN, YOU, YOU JUST STARTLED ME. HAHAHA. I, I WAS PAINTING UP THIS WUH-WARNING NOTICE, AS, AS ORDERED...
A-AFTER THAT T.V. SHOW, WE THOUGHT IT BEST TO COMPLY WITH SAFETY REGULATIONS...
SAFETY REGULATIONS. I SEE.
IT SEEMS I'M INCAPABLE OF COHABITING SAFELY EITHER EMOTIONALLY OR PHYSICALLY. PERHAPS YOU'D BEST TELL MS. JUSPECZYK AND YOUR SUPERIORS THAT I'M LEAVING.
LEAVING?
YES. FOR ARIZONA FIRST, I THINK, AND THEN MARS.
M...?
AAWWW... HAH HA HA HAH! DOC, YOU HAD ME GOIN' THERE! HA HA HA! HEY, Y'KNOW, YOU'RE A REG'LAR KINDA...
...GUY...
HOLY CHRIST.
SERGEANT?
SERGEANT, I GOT A MESSAGE FOR YA...
19


BAR
THE BESTIARY
At play amidst the Strangeness and Charm.
20

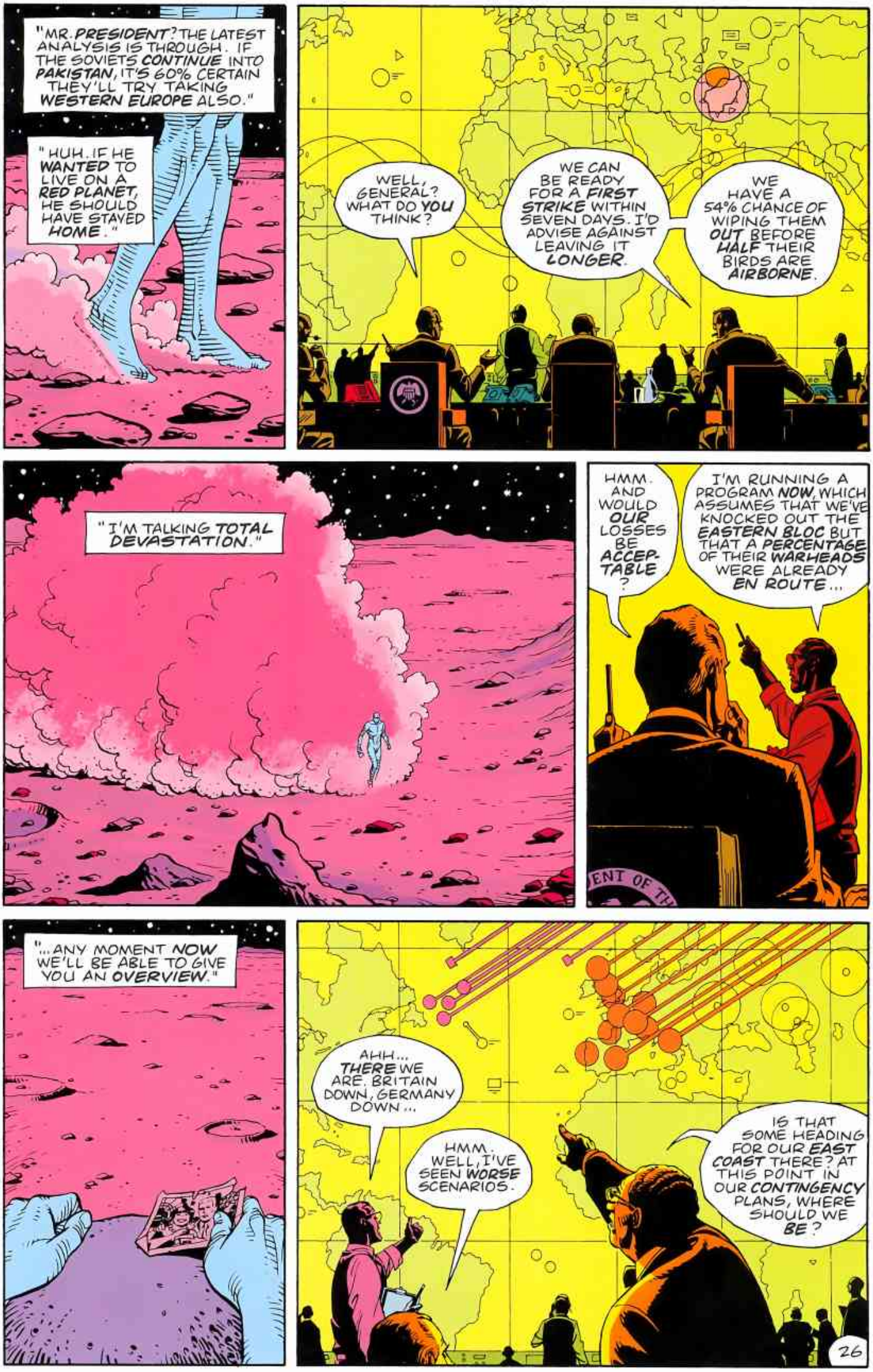

TEST BASE
THAT NIGHT, I SLEPT BADLY BENEATH COLD, DISTANT STARS, PONDERING UPON THE COLD, DISTANT GOD IN WHOSE HANDS THE FATE OF DAVIDSTOWN RESTED.
WAS HE REALLY THERE?
HAD HE BEEN THERE ONCE, BUT NOW DEPARTED?
21

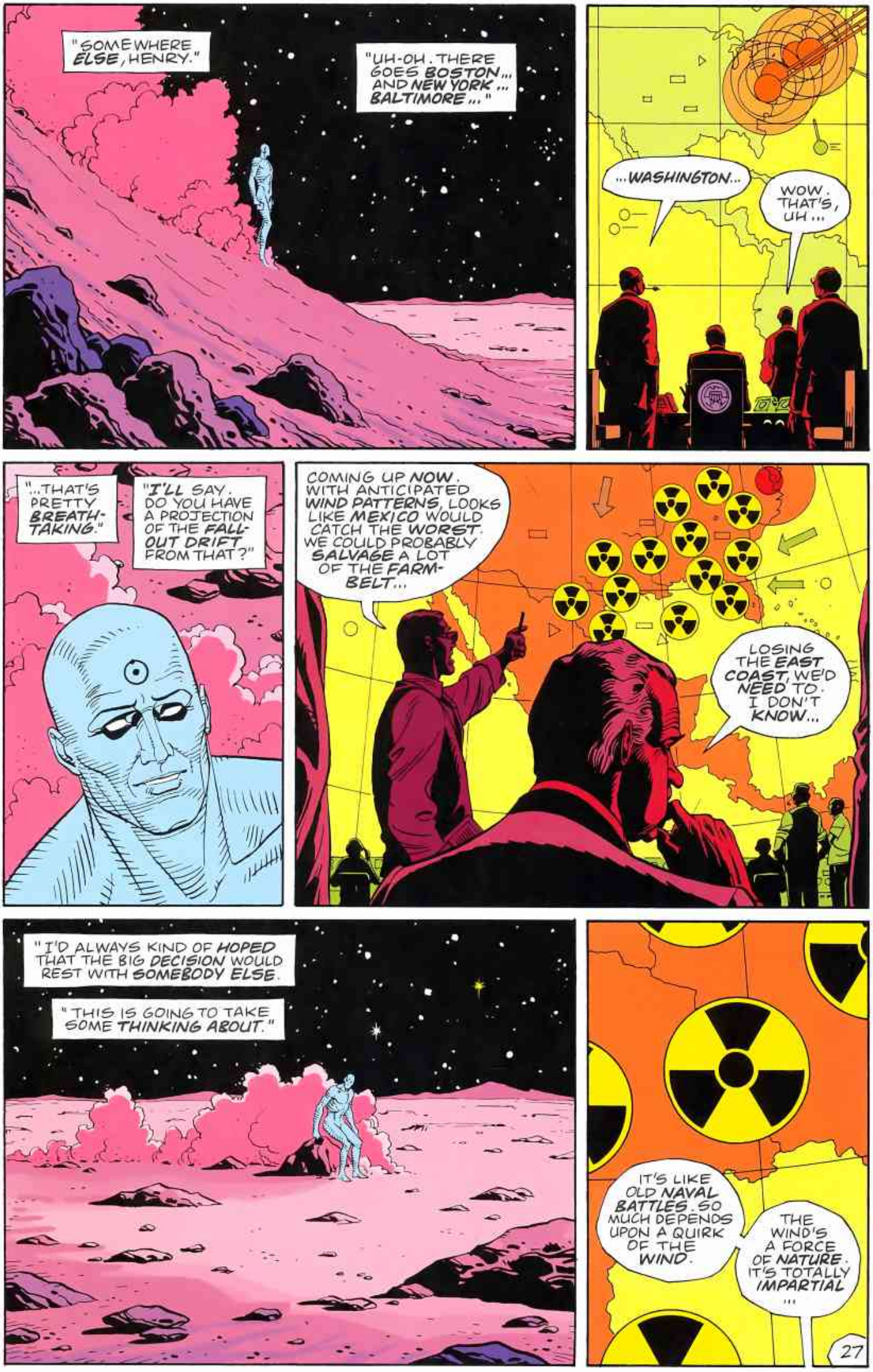

THE MORNING SUN FOUND ME NO MORE WISE, NO LESS TROUBLED. FURTHER DOWN THE SHORE, SEVERAL OF THE BEACHED CORPSES HAD BECOME INFLATED BY GAS.
YOU SEEN THIS? HE'S GONE! NEW FRONTIERSMAN SAYS IT'S THE RUSSIANS!
I SET ABOUT BURYING THE SODDEN CARCASSES, MATCHING ODD LIMBS AS BEST I COULD. WITH THEM, I BURIED ALL HOPE FOR MY FAMILY'S SURVIVAL.
I MEAN, WHAT'S NEXT, Y'KNOW?
GIVE ME A GAZETTE, AS WELL.
SURE. THERE Y'ARE. Y'KNOW, I HAD IT TAGGED FOR A RED SMEAR FROM THE START. I'M A NEWS-VENDOR.
HOW ABOUT YOU? I SEE THE WORLD DIDN'T END YESTERDAY.
ARE YOU SURE?
USING DRIFTWOOD, I BEGAN A PIT, DEEP AND WIDE. I HAD NEVER SEEN NOR IMAGINED SO MANY DEAD PEOPLE.
NOON CAME AND WENT. BY DUSK, THE CRATER WAS DEEP ENOUGH AND I COMMENCED HAULING THOSE COLD, MAIMED, WRETCHED THINGS INTO THE BED I HAD PREPARED.
DRAGGING AND CURSING, I HOPED MY WIFE AND DAUGHTERS MIGHT BE TUCKED IN BY GENTLER HANDS WHEN THEIR TURN CAME.
I BEGAN TO WEEP AGAIN. DEAR GOD, WHO WOULD PROTECT THEM?
HEY! ARE YOU BACK AGAIN? LISTEN, WHEN ARE YA THINKIN' O' PAYIN' FOR THAT FUNNY BOOK?
THE FREIGHTER WAS ALMOST UPON THEM. WHO WOULD CARE FOR THEM, NOW I WAS GONE?
NEWS
NY
22

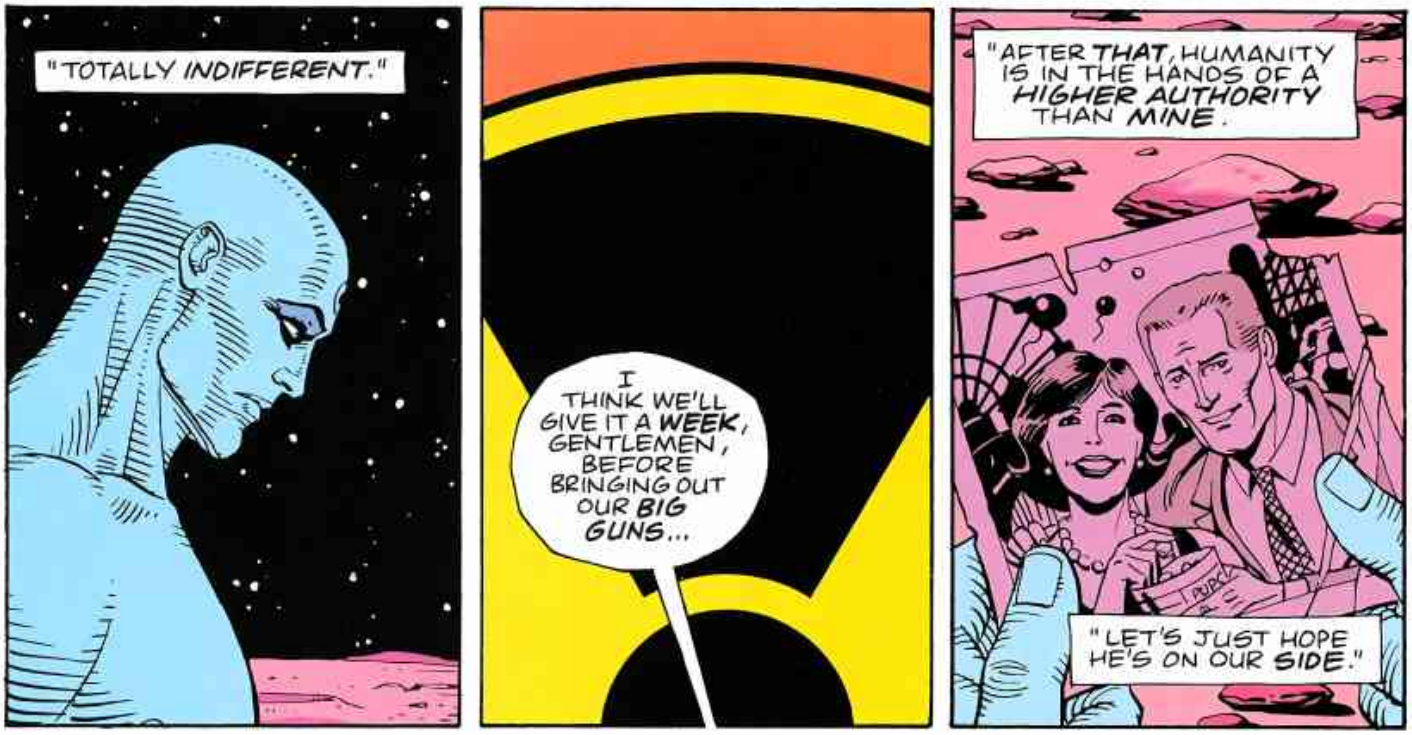
GONE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HE'S GONE?
I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU SPENT LAST NIGHT, MS. JUSPECZYK, BUT HAVEN'T YOU READ THE PAPERS? DR. MANHATTAN LEFT EARTH.
NOW, PLEASE... WE HAVE TO GIVE YOU A CANCER SCAN AND ASK SOME QUESTIONS...
US ARMY
CANCER SCAN? WHAT IS THIS? WHO'RE ALL THESE PEOPLE?
LEAVE THAT ALONE! THAT'S MY MOTHER'S!
MS. JUSPECZYK, WE HAVE TO ASK... DID YOU PLACE DR. OSTERMAN UNDER ANY EMOTIONAL STRESS LAST NIGHT?
WHAT? ARE... ARE YOU BLAMING ME FOR SOMETHING?
JESUS CHRIST, I HAVE TAKEN ENOUGH OF THIS.
WH-WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? LISTEN, WHEN JON GETS BACK, YOU'RE IN BIG TROUBLE...
LISTEN, LADY, IF OUR PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE RIGHT, "JON" IS QUITE POSSIBLY NEVER COMING BACK! YOUR MEAL TICKET HAS FLOWN THE COOP!
THE LINCHPIN OF AMERICA'S STRATEGIC SUPERIORITY HAS APPARENTLY GONE TO MARS!
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT...
I AM IN BIG TROUBLE...
... AND YOU'RE IN BIG TROUBLE...
23

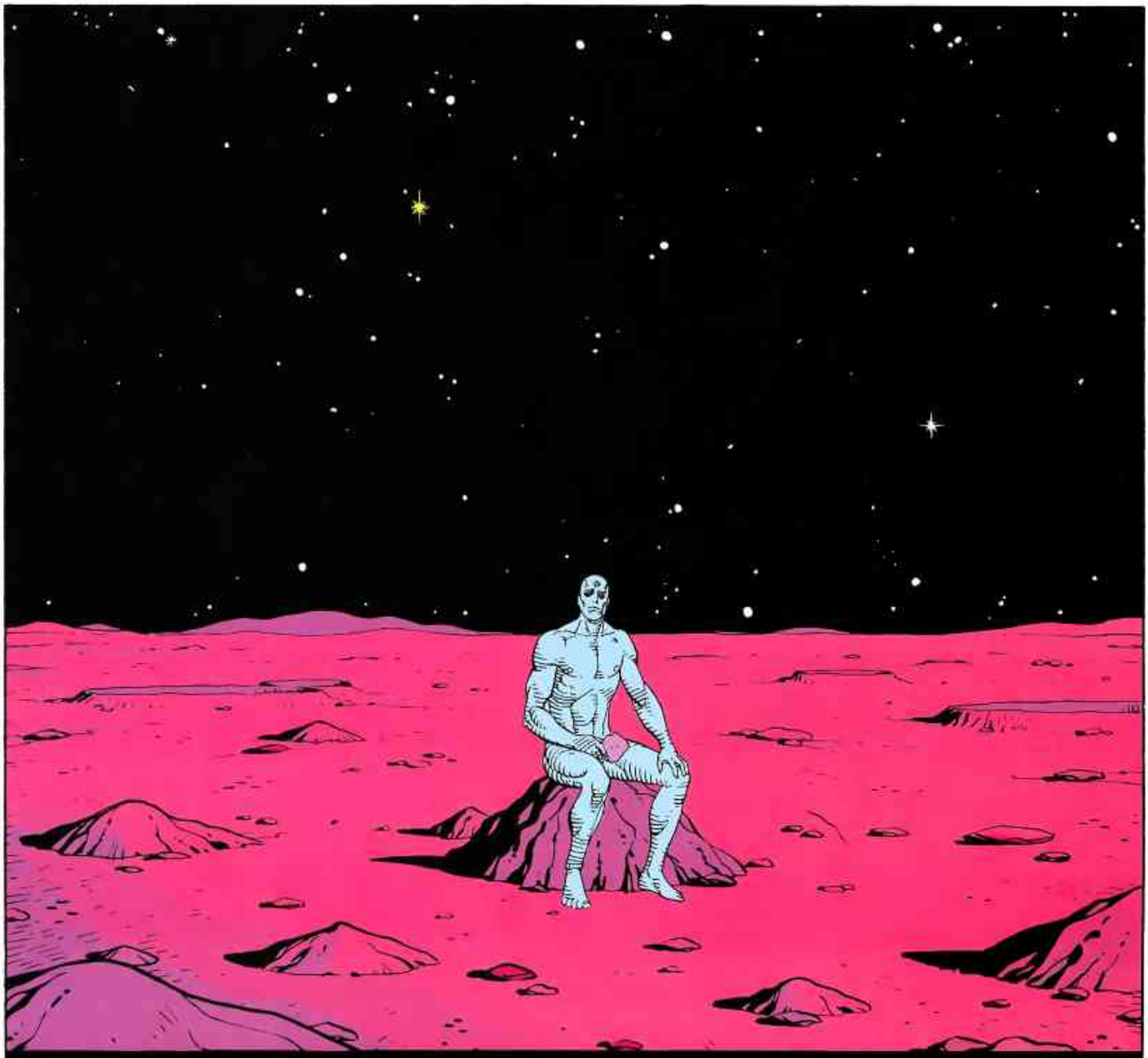
"... AND WE'RE ALL IN BIG TROUBLE!"
MANHATTAN LEAVES EARTH
WMUH?
MANHATTAN LEAVES EARTH
FNFF
FNFF-FNFF
GOOD MORNING, DANIEL.
BROUGHT YOU YOUR SUNDAY PAPER.
THE COMEDIAN MURDERED, DR. MANHATTAN EXILED...
TWO OF US GONE. ALL WITHIN A WEEK.
WHO NEXT? VEIDT? JUSPECZYK? ME?
YOU?
BY THE WAY, YOU NEED A STRONGER LOCK. THAT NEW ONE BROKE AFTER ONE SHOVE.
New York Gazette
SUNDAY
MY NEW LOCK?
POOR CHOICE. GET MORE EXPENSIVE ONE. CAN'T BE TOO SECURITY CONSCIOUS.
ESPECIALLY NOT THESE DAYS.
THESE DAYS, NOBODY'S SAFE.
BE SEEING YOU. THANKS FOR THE COFFEE AND CEREAL.
SUNDAY SECTIONS
New York Gazette
DR. MANHATTA
LEAVES EARTH
BENNY ANGER
24

Y'KNOW, SUPER-HEROES ARE FINISHED. THESE DAYS, IT'S ALL PIRATES.
EXHAUSTED, I SLEPT ATOP THE GRAVE, DREAMS RINGING WITH THE HORRIBLY FAMILIAR SCREAMS OF CHILDREN. I SAW THE BLACK FREIGHTER BEARING DOWN ON ALL I LOVED...
...BUT I WAS POWERLESS TO STOP IT.
CONTINUED NEXT MONTH.
EWS
BACK IN '39, BEFORE THE REAL MASKED MEN SHOWED UP, SUPER-HERO COMICS WERE ENORMOUS. GUESS THEIR APPEAL WORE OFF...
I REMEMBER THERE WAS SUPER-MAN, FLASH-MAN...
UH-OH! HERE'S THE EVENIN' EDITION DELIVERY...
HEY, MAN, I AIN'T BUYIN' THIS! RIPOFF STORY AIN'T GOT NO ENDIN'!
GIMME A BREAK, WILLYA? I'M ACCEPTIN' A CONSIGN-MENT!
THANKS, CHUCK.
JUST LEFT HANGIN' WITH THAT SHIP COMIN' IN GONNA KILL EVERY-BODY. SHEE-IT. I'M GOIN' HOME.
LET'S SEE WHAT'S HAPPENIN' IN THE WORLD THIS FINE SUNDAY NI...
OH, JESUS.
JIVE PIRATES, MAN. YOU CAN KEEP IT.
WHAT?
NO... NO, YOU... YOU CAN HAVE IT...
AN' Y'CAN HAVE MY CAP, TOO. LISTEN, YOU GET HOME TO YOUR MOM, OKAY? YOU BE GOOD TO HER...
I MEAN... I MEAN WE ALL GOTTA LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER, DON'T WE?
I MEAN, THAT'S MY PHILOSOPHY...
UHH... SURE! HEY, THANKS FOR THE STUFF, MAN. LISTEN, I GOTTA GO. YOU TAKE CARE, MAN.
YEAH. YEAH, YOU TOO.
A-AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT PAYIN' FOR THAT BOOK. I MEAN, LIFE'S TOO SHORT...
FINAL New York Gazet
RUSSIANS INVADE AFGHANIST
INNA FINAL ANALYSIS.
25


"MR. PRESIDENT? THE LATEST ANALYSIS IS THROUGH. IF THE SOVIETS CONTINUE INTO PAKISTAN, IT'S 60% CERTAIN THEY'LL TRY TAKING WESTERN EUROPE ALSO."
"HUH. IF HE WANTED TO LIVE ON A RED PLANET, HE SHOULD HAVE STAYED HOME."
WELL, GENERAL? WHAT DO YOU THINK?
WE CAN BE READY FOR A FIRST STRIKE WITHIN SEVEN DAYS. I'D ADVISE AGAINST LEAVING IT LONGER.
WE HAVE A 54% CHANCE OF WIPING THEM OUT BEFORE HALF THEIR BIRDS ARE AIRBORNE.
"I'M TALKING TOTAL DEVASTATION."
HMM. AND WOULD OUR LOSSES BE ACCEP-TABLE?
I'M RUNNING A PROGRAM NOW, WHICH ASSUMES THAT WE'VE KNOCKED OUT THE EASTERN BLOC BUT THAT A PERCENTAGE OF THEIR WARHEADS WERE ALREADY EN ROUTE...
"...ANY MOMENT NOW WE'LL BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU AN OVERVIEW."
AHH... THERE WE ARE. BRITAIN DOWN, GERMANY DOWN...
HMM. WELL, I'VE SEEN WORSE SCENARIOS.
IS THAT SOME HEADING FOR OUR EAST COAST THERE? AT THIS POINT IN OUR CONTINGENCY PLANS, WHERE SHOULD WE BE?
26


"SOMEWHERE ELSE, HENRY."
"UH-OH. THERE GOES BOSTON... AND NEW YORK... BALTIMORE..."
...WASHINGTON...
WOW. THAT'S, UH...
"...THAT'S PRETTY BREATH-TAKING."
"I'LL SAY. DO YOU HAVE A PROJECTION OF THE FALL-OUT DRIFT FROM THAT?"
COMING UP NOW. WITH ANTICIPATED WIND PATTERNS, LOOKS LIKE MEXICO WOULD CATCH THE WORST. WE COULD PROBABLY SALVAGE A LOT OF THE FARM-BELT...
LOSING THE EAST COAST, WE'D NEED TO. I DON'T KNOW...
"I'D ALWAYS KIND OF HOPED THAT THE BIG DECISION WOULD REST WITH SOMEBODY ELSE.
"THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME THINKING ABOUT."
IT'S LIKE OLD NAVAL BATTLES. SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON A QUIRK OF THE WIND.
THE WIND'S A FORCE OF NATURE. IT'S TOTALLY IMPARTIAL...
27


"TOTALLY INDIFFERENT."
I THINK WE'LL GIVE IT A WEEK, GENTLEMEN, BEFORE BRINGING OUT OUR BIG GUNS...
"AFTER THAT, HUMANITY IS IN THE HANDS OF A HIGHER AUTHORITY THAN MINE.
"LET'S JUST HOPE HE'S ON OUR SIDE."



Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? —GENESIS chapter 18, verse 25

Presented here are the excerpts from UNDER THE HOOD. In this next chapter Hollis Mason discusses the traumas of the 1950s and the emergence of the new super-heroes. Reprinted with permission of the author.

V.

The Minutemen didn't get to usher in the 1950s with a Christmas celebration the way we'd ushered in the '40s, and perhaps that's appropriate. The decade following the disbanding of the group was cold and bleak, both for me in particular and for masked adventurers in general. Plus, it seemed to go on forever.

1947: Sally Jupiter marries Laurence Schexnayder. Can you spot the famous faces in the crowd?

I think the worst thing was the belated realization of just how much a fad we'd always been, something to fill the dead columns of the newspapers right alongside the Hula Hoop and the Jitterbug. Ever since Sally Jupiter married her manager, his tireless, shrewd efforts as a publicist had been noticeably absent. He'd recognized that the day of the costumed hero was over – even though we hadn't – and he'd gotten out while the getting was good. Consequently, we found our exploits being reported less and less frequently. When they were reported, the tone was often derisive. I can remember a lot of hooded vigilante jokes coming into circulation during the early fifties. The mildest was one that suggested we were called The Minutemen due to our performance in the bedroom. There were an awful lot of bright blue gags about Sally Jupiter. I know, because she told me most of them herself the last time I saw her.

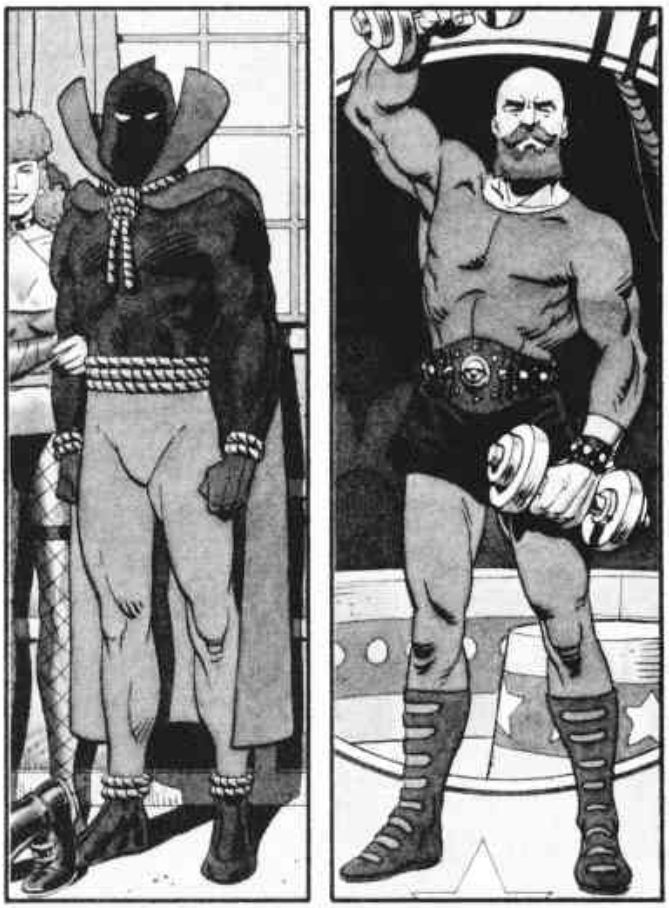
Sally had a baby girl named Laurel Jane in 1949, and it seemed to be right about then that her marital problems started. These were widely discussed, so I don't think I need repeat them here. Suffice it to say that the marriage ended in 1956, and since then Sally has done a first rate job of bringing her daughter up into a bright, spunky youngster that any mother could be proud of.

The thing about that particular decade is that things first started getting *serious* then. I remember thinking at the time that it was funny how the more serious things got, the better the Comedian seemed to do. Out of the whole bunch of us, he was the only one who was still right up there on the front pages, still making the occasional headline. On the strength of his military work he had good government connections, and it often seemed as if he was being groomed into some sort of patriotic symbol. At the height of the McCarthy era, nobody had any doubts about where the Comedian's feet were planted politically.

That was more than could be said for the rest of us. We all had to testify before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, and were all forced to reveal our true identities to one of its representatives. Galling though this was, it didn't present any immediate problems for most of us. With Captain Metropolis having such an outstanding military record and with my own service in the police force, we both were more or less cleared of suspicion right away. Mothman met with more difficulty, mostly because of some left-wing friends he'd cultivated during his student days. He was eventually cleared, but the investigations were both lengthy and ruthless, and I think that the pressure he was under at that time prompted the beginnings of the drinking problem that has contributed so much to his later mental ill-health.

Only Hooded Justice refused to testify, on the grounds that he was not prepared to reveal

his true identity to anyone. When pressed, he simply vanished . . . or at least that's how it seemed. Vanishing is no big problem when you're a costumed hero – you just take your costume off. It seemed quite likely that Hooded Justice had simply chosen to retire rather than reveal his identity, which the authorities seemed perfectly happy with.



(left) Hooded Justice (right) Rolf Müller. Were they the same man?

The only detail concerning the disappearance of America's first masked adventurer that still nags at me was trivial, and maybe not even connected at all; it was brought up in an article that appeared in *The New Frontiersman*, almost a year after Hooded Justice vanished. The author mentioned the disappearance of a well known circus strongman of the day named Rolf Müller, who had quit his job at the height of the Senate Subcommittee hearings. Three months later, a badly decomposed body that was tentatively identified as Müller's was pulled from the sea after being washed up on the coast of Boston. Müller, assuming the body actually was that of the renowned weightlifter, had been shot through the head. The inference of the article was that Müller, whose family was East German, had gone on the run for fear of being uncovered while the Communist witch hunts were at their most feverish. The piece also implied that Müller had probably been executed by his own Red superiors.

I always wondered about that. Müller disappeared at almost exactly the same time as Hooded Justice was last seen, and the two men had corresponding builds. Whether the body washed up on that Boston shoreline belonged to Müller or not, neither he nor Hooded Justice were ever seen or heard from again. Were they the same man? If they were, were they really dead? If they were dead, who killed them? Was Hooded Justice really working for the Reds? I don't know. Real life is messy, inconsistent, and it's seldom when anything ever really gets resolved. It's taken me a long time to realize that.

One of the big problems that faced costumed heroes at the time was the absence of costumed criminals of any real note. I don't think any of us realized how much we needed those goons until they started to thin out. You see, if you're the only one who'd bothered to turn up for a free-for-all in costume, you tended to look kind of stupid. If the bad guys joined in as well, it wasn't so bad, but without them it was always sort of embarrassing. There had never been as many costumed criminals as heroes, but with the end of the 1940s the trend grew much more pronounced.

Most of the crooks turned in their costumes along with their criminal careers, but some just opted for a less extroverted and more profitable approach. The new breed of villains, despite their often colorful names, were mostly ordinary men in business suits who ran drug and prostitution rackets. That's not to say they didn't cause as much trouble . . . far from it; I

just mean that they weren't as much fun to fight. All the cases I ended up investigating during the '50s seemed sordid and depressing and quite often blood-chillingly horrible. I don't know what it was...there just seemed to be a sort of bleak, uneasy feeling in the air. It was as if some essential element of our lives, of all our lives, was vanishing before we knew entirely what it was. I don't think I could really describe it completely except maybe to somebody who remembered the terrific elation we all felt after the war: we felt that we'd taken the worst that the 20th century could throw at us and stood our ground. We felt as if we'd really won a hard-earned age of peace and prosperity that would see us well into the year 2000. This optimism lasted all through the '40s and the early '50s, but by the middle of that latter decade it was starting to wear thin, and there was a sort of ominous feeling in the air.

Partly it was the beatniks, the jazz musicians and the poets openly condemning American values whenever they opened their mouths. Partly it was Elvis Presley and the whole Rock 'n' Roll boom. Had we fought a war for our country so that our daughters could scream and swoon over young men who looked like *this*, who sounded like *that?* With all these sudden social upheavals just when we thought we'd gotten everything straight, it was impossible to live through the 1950s without a sense of impending catastrophe bearing implacably down upon the whole country, the whole world. Some people thought it was war and others thought it was flying saucers, but those things weren't really what was bearing down upon us. What was bearing down upon us was the 1960s.

The '60s, along with the mini-skirt and the Beatles, brought one thing to the world that was significant above all others – its name was Dr. Manhattan. The arrival of Dr. Manhattan would make the terms "masked hero" and "costumed adventurer" as obsolete as the persons they described. A new phrase had entered the American language, just as a new and almost terrifying concept had entered its consciousness. It was the dawn of the Super-Hero.

Manhattan's existence was announced to the world in the March of 1960, and I don't think there can have been anybody on the planet who didn't feel that same strange jumble of emotions when they heard the news. Foremost amongst this assortment of sensations was disbelief. The idea of a being who could walk through walls, move from one place to another without covering the intervening distance and re-arrange things completely with a single thought was flat-out impossible. On the other hand, the people presenting this news to us were our own government. The notion that they might simply have made it up was equally improbable, and in the face of this contradiction, it became gradually easier to accept the dream-like unreality of those first newsreel images: a blue man melting a tank with a wave of his hand; the fragments of a disassembled rifle floating there eerily in the air with nobody touching them. Once accepted as reality, however, such things became no easier to digest. If you accept that floating rifle parts are real you also have to somehow accept that everything you've ever known to be a fact is probably untrue. That peculiar unease is something that most of us have learned to live with over the years, but it's still there.

The other emotions that accompanied the announcement were perhaps harder to identify and pin down. There was a certain elation...it felt as if Santa Claus had suddenly turned out to be real after all. Coupled with and complementary to this was a terrible and uneven sense of fear and uncertainty. While this was hard to define precisely, if I had to boil it down into three words, those words would be, "We've been replaced." I'm not just talking about the non-powered costumed hero fraternity here, you understand, although Dr. Manhattan's appearance was certainly one of the factors that led to my own increased feelings of obsolescence and my eventual decision to quit the hero business altogether. You see, while masked vigilantes had certainly been made obsolete, so in a sense had every other living organism upon the planet. I don't think that society has fully realized yet just exactly what Dr. Manhattan's arrival means; how much it's likely to change every detail of our lives.

Although Dr. Manhattan was the most prominent by far of the 'New Breed' of costumed heroes, he wasn't quite the first nor by any means the last. In the closing months of 1958, the papers mentioned that a major opium and heroin smuggling racket had been busted by a

young adventurer named Ozymandias, who seemed to have quickly gained a reputation amongst the criminal fraternity for his boundless and implacable intelligence, not to mention a large degree of athletic prowess.

I met both Dr. Manhattan and Ozymandias for the first time at a charity event in the June of 1960. Ozymandias seemed to be a nice young fellow, although I personally found Dr. Manhattan to be a little distant. Maybe that was more my fault than his, though, since I found it very difficult to feel easy around the guy, even once I'd got used to the shock of his physical presence. It's a strange feeling...the first time you meet him your brain wants to scream, blow a fuse and shut itself down immediately, refusing to accept that he exists. This lasts for a couple of minutes, at which time he's still there and hasn't gone away, and in the end you just accept him because he's standing there and talking to you and after a while it almost seems normal.

Almost.

Anyway, at that charity event...I think it was Red Cross relief for the ongoing famine in India...a lot of things became apparent to me. Looking around at the other adventurers there, I wasn't happy with what I saw: The Comedian was there, imposing his overbearing personality and his obnoxious cigar smoke upon anyone within reach. Mothman was there, a glass in one hand, slurring his words and letting his sentences trail off into incoherence. Captain Metropolis was there, his paunch starting to show despite a strict regimen of Canadian Air Force Exercises. Finally, leaving the two younger heroes aside for a moment, there was me: Forty-six years old and starting to feel it, still trying to cut it in the company of guys who could level a mountain by snapping their fingers. I think it was when that moment of self insight hit me that I first decided to finally hang up my mask and get myself a proper job. I'd been about due to retire from the police force for some time, and I started wondering about what I wanted to do now that the thrill of adventure had finally started to pale. Looking back over my life, I tried to work out what I'd been doing during my existence's happier stretches, in order to form a basis for my future contentment.

After much deliberation, I concluded that I'd never been happier than when helping my dad beat some sense into an obstinate engine down at Moe Vernon's yard. After a life of crime-fighting, no notion seemed sweeter to me than that of spending my autumn years contentedly making dead vehicles run again in the confines of my own auto repair shop.

In the May of this year, 1962, that's exactly what I opted to do.

I retired. To mend cars. Probably for the rest of my life. As I see it, part of the art of being a hero is knowing when you don't need to be one anymore, realizing that the game has changed and that the stakes are different and that there isn't necessarily a place for you in this strange new pantheon of extraordinary people. The world has moved on, and I'm content to watch it from my armchair with a beer by my side and the smell of fresh oil still on my fingers.

Part of my contentment comes from knowing that there have maybe been some overall consequence of my twenty-three years behind the mask. This knowledge came to me in the shape of a letter from a young man whose name I'm not at liberty to reveal. He told me of his great admiration for my efforts as Nite Owl and proposed that since I'd retired and would no longer be using the name, perhaps he could borrow it since he intended to follow my example and become a crime-fighter. I've visited his home since then and seen some of the fabulous technology he intends to bring to bear on the war against crime. I was certainly far too impressed to refuse him the use of what I'd always thought was dumb name to begin with, so by the time this sees print there may well be a new Nite Owl patrolling the streets of New York. Also, Sally Jupiter tells me that as soon as little Laurie's old enough she wants to be a super-heroine just like her mom, so who knows? It seems as if from being a novelty nine-day wonder, the super-hero has become a part of American life. It's here to stay.

For better, or for worse.

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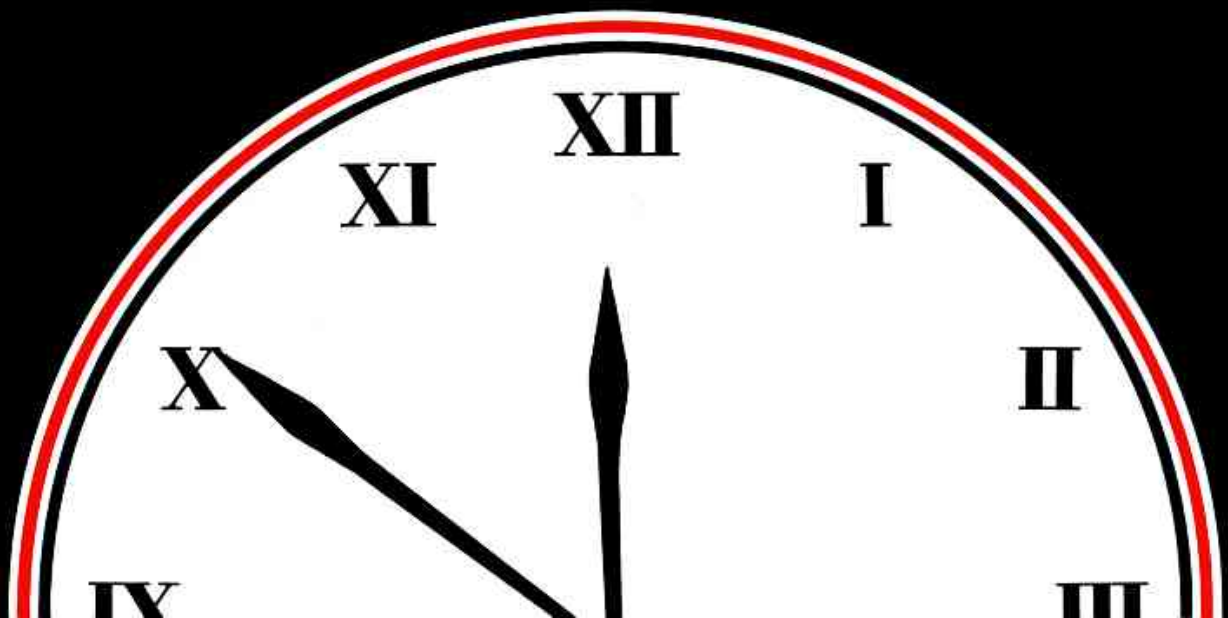
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story pages by
TheKid
tag designed by
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MINUTEMEN